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AUTHOR Dwyer, Edward
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ABSTRACT

The prefaces of textbooks have considerable value as aids in helping students profit more from their reading. But they are frequently ignored by most young readers and rarely if ever assigned by teachers in a formal manner as aids to instruction. A model teaching unit originally using a social studies text can lead students to see the value of a preface, but more importantly, to conclude that the preface of every text has value. In, this model, items requiring responses are typed in a worksheet format, photocopied, and then distributed to the students. Students write their answers on scrap paper, edit them, and then write their final answers in the spaces provided on the worksheet. The model is adaptable to a wide variety of circumstances. It is advisable to have a preface unit on file and readily available for each text that will be used extensively. Students will routinely find themselves reading the preface of a text even when they are not required to do so. (The introduction of the textbook on which the model is based and a sample of questions are included.) (HTH)

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The Preface:

A Model for Using This Valuable But Usually Overlooked Part of a Book

Edward Dwyer

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The Preface:
A Model for Using This Valuable But Usually Overlooked Part of A Book

Edward Dwyer
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, Tennessee

The preface is a "preliminary statement, often made by an author in a publication, giving its purpose, organization, and scope, acknowledging assistance, etc." (Harris and Hodges, 1981). The preface, frequently called the foreword or introduction or simply "to the student," provides such valuable information concerning the nature of a book. Pauk (1975) suggested that the preface describes 1) what the subject is and what it is not, 2) how the book differs from others, 3) why the author is competent to deal with the subject, and 4) the organizational plan of the book. Further, Pauk pointed out that the preface provides the author with the opportunity to be a "living, breathing person" with a love for the subject matter and a concern for the people wanting to learn more about it. Robinson (1978) suggested that the preface should be read so that students can learn about the authors objectives and the overall contents of the text. Robinson also advised that some authors prepare a special student's preface with valuable organizational aids.

Clearly, the preface has considerable value as an aid in helping students profit more from their reading. The preface, however, is ignored by most young readers and rarely if ever assigned by teachers in a formal manner as a specific aid to instruction. For example, I recently asked a class of 35 students if anyone had read the preface to the class textbook. No one had read it. I then asked if anyone had ever had the preface of a book assigned at any time by a teacher and the response was still negative. Consequently, I designed a model unit using a social studies text randomly selected for the purpose of leading students to see the value of its preface but, more importantly, to generally determine that the preface of every text has value. The text seemed appropriate, too, since most of the students intended to teach at either the elementary or junior high school levels. The introduction is presented in full below to clarify portions of the model. The format I chose was one in which the items requiring responses were typed in a worksheet format, photocopied, and then distributed to the students. Lines were drawn under each item. Students were advised to write their answers on scrap paper, edit them, and then write the answer on the spaces provided. This encourages neatness and getting to the central ideas.

Introduction

History is the recorded memory of mankind — the thoughts, sayings, and deeds of people who have lived before us. Only a small part of all that has happened is included in written history because many

events were not noticed or did not seem important at the time. Much information has been lost or forgotten through the years, but, even so, we know a great deal about past events in most parts of the world.

Reminders of the past are all around us. Many everyday articles have historical significance. Family names, toys, games, art, music, and literature tell us about the past as vividly as do monuments, battlefields, and old buildings.

No person could possibly know all of the history that has been written. Moreover, as we discover new information, our view of past events is subject to change. Every day, new knowledge is added to what we have already learned. Sometimes the new facts confirm or improve our understanding of what was known before. Occasionally, former ideas must be completely discarded. Historians must always be ready to meet the challenge offered by new information.

Long Ago in the Old World recounts some of the most exciting aspects of the history of western civilization, from the earliest times until the years when Europeans turned westward to America. The story is a thrilling one, even though certain events will never be completely understood. People make history, and the actions of people are frequently not easy to explain. However, we can understand some things in our present world only if we know what has gone before.

The text has been written in a way that will arouse the reader's interest. Unnecessary dates, terms, and names have been avoided. The maps appearing with the text place the important events of history in their proper geographic setting. The maps are deliberately simple, easy to interpret and to use. The time charts provide the reader with the proper relationships of events in the most significant periods of time. The questions at the end of each chapter are planned for use in discussion or assignment. They will help in guiding the reader to a true appreciation of the enduring past. The carefully selected illustrations, many especially drawn for this book, make the history of the Old World alive and fascinating.

The authors have taken into account all of the latest available research and discoveries. In addition, they have turned to many experts in various fields of knowledge and advice. These include Professor Donald P. Gavin, Director of the Department of History at John Carroll University; Dr. Penrose Saint Amant, Dean, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Dr. Francis J. Moore, Protestant Episcopal Church, Diocese of Southern Ohio; and Linda Piper, Department of History, Ohio State University. Their suggestions for various parts of the manuscript have enabled the authors to prepare a text that is believed to be balanced and accurate in all its aspects.

For those studying world history for the first time, *Long Ago in the Old World* presents a real opportunity for adventure and discovery.

LONG AGO IN THE OLD WORLD

(A model for introducing students to a book through studying the preface)
Text: Cassidy, Vincent H. and John Duyn Southworth, *Long Ago in the Old World:* Columbus Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Company, 1969.

Introduction: Long Ago in the Old World is a book we will use in our social studies class this year. The activities presented below will help us to find out more about this book. Read the introduction and answer the following questions on the lines provided.

Questions:

1. How did Vincent Cassidy and John Southworth prepare the maps used in *Long Ago in the Old World?*
2. What reasons did the authors give for leaving out many dates, terms, and names?
3. In Column *A* list the names of four experts the authors got help from in writing this book. In Column *B* beside each name, tell the job that the person had.

A (Person)	*B (Job)*
1. _____	_____

4. Why do the authors think it is important to study history?
5. Do the authors think that descriptions of events in their book might be different in books in the future? Explain your answer.
6. What is the "Old World"?
7. Why do everyday articles like toys and games have "historical significance"?
8. How do historians know what happened hundreds of years ago?
9. Is it a waste of time to study about people who died many years ago? Explain.
10. What do you think you will find most interesting in this book?

The model described above is adaptable to a wide variety of circumstances. The purpose is not one of specific design but to enhance awareness of the value of the preface. It is advisable to have a preface unit on file and readily avail ble for each text that will be used extensively. Further, students will routinely find themselves reading the preface of a text even when they don't have to. Becoming adept at understanding the preface is a valuable reading skill which can enhance comprehension by getting readers off to a good start.

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